

DHL workers strike at Halle/Leipzig Airport: Place no trust in the Verdi union!

Marianne Arens**8 June 2025**

Last Wednesday evening, June 4, a strike began at DHL Hub Leipzig GmbH, lasting several days. Around 1,000 DHL workers at Halle/Leipzig Airport walked off the job. At a rally on Thursday evening they vented their anger about low-wage slavery. It is the workers' second warning strike in a fortnight.

The strike is an expression of very justified dissatisfaction. Employees at DHL Hub Leipzig in eastern Germany earn up to €700 less per month than comparable DHL colleagues in the west of the country. They have to load and unload planes in all weather and mainly at night, including Sundays and public holidays, and sort and forward international freight, which means long, hard, backbreaking work.

The current demand is for a 12 percent pay rise over a 12-month term, but management has rejected this as "completely unrealistic." Even if fully implemented, this demand would not even close the large gap, let alone cover the pent-up shortfall from the coronavirus period and the last few years of high inflation.

However, the industrial action is doomed to failure if it is left to the Verdi trade union for any length of time. The Verdi leadership stands on the opposite side. Their intention is to avoid at all costs an indefinite all-out strike and to ultimately enforce the dictates of management.

On June 11 and 12, Verdi and the civil servants' union DPVKOM will hold a third round of negotiations with the management of DHL Hub Leipzig. And there is no doubt that Verdi is prepared to accept long contract terms and a reduction in real wages, just as in previous negotiations.

The collective agreement that Verdi negotiated at Deutsche Post DHL in March 2025 was already a provocation. It began with a three-month pay freeze, followed by a below-inflation 2 percent wage increase.

The demand was for 7 percent. Instead of a one-year term, the agreement was for a two-year term. Deutsche Post management took the poor agreement as encouragement to announce 8,000 job cuts at the postal and parcel service just two days later.

The leadership of the service union Verdi has been careful to split up the postal workers and isolate workers' strikes. This is the reason why there are different collective contracts for each division, depending on whether it is Post & Paket Deutschland, DHL Express, DHL Hub Leipzig or its subcontractors. The aim is to avoid a joint, nationwide strike. This is why the employees of DHL Hub Leipzig, who are now striking for their own in-house contract, were not called on to strike during the Deutsche Post bargaining negotiations a few weeks ago.

The union only recently proved where it stands at Berlin local transit company BVG. With the latest agreement, which was reached with the help of mediators Bodo Ramelow (Left Party) and Matthias Platzeck (Social Democrat, SPD), Verdi negotiated a result that is far below the original demand and by no means compensates for the loss of real wages in recent years. To achieve this betrayal, the union ignored a vote by 94.5 percent of employees in favour of an indefinite strike.

The experiences of the last few months clearly show that better wages and conditions can only be achieved if DHL and postal workers take their fight out of the hands of the Verdi bureaucrats. Ultimately, they can only succeed if they join forces with colleagues in other DHL and Deutsche Post branches, and bases in Germany and abroad. To this end, it is necessary to set up independent rank-and-file action committees.

Only in this way will it be possible to carry out industrial action effectively and—to give just one

example—not call it off after the second night of the strike. In response to the unrest in the company, Verdi announced a three-day strike and in the same breath published a statement saying: “The strike should last at least until Friday night,” which is only two nights of strike action.

Secondly, and more importantly, workers need to independently verify the strike conditions, especially any authorised emergency service provisions. There is constant talk in the media about “vital blood supplies,” which Verdi and DHL management had agreed would be transported. But which “emergency freight shipments” are also exempt from the strike? According to broadcaster Mitteldeutscher Rundfunk, despite the strike, the landing cargo planes are all being unloaded—why?

It is particularly necessary to keep an eye on freight destined directly or indirectly to provide arms for the Bundeswehr (Armed Forces), the wars in Ukraine and elsewhere and the genocide in Gaza. These must be stopped immediately. This must also apply after the warning strike: It is impossible to tranship freight that is destined for and used to kill workers around the world.

The fight against low-wage labour and exploitation cannot be separated from the fight against war. It requires close co-operation with colleagues in other DHL and postal companies and the working class as a whole. This applies in Germany and Europe as well as all over the world.

The DHL Group is an international corporation with a wide variety of subsidiaries and connections worldwide. The majority of its top managers are trained at McKinsey; they are at the service of the global speculators and are handsomely remunerated, as are the trade union bureaucrats.

At the same time, Post DHL is linked not least to the Italian postal service—which is also currently on strike. A national postal strike has been taking place in Italy since June 3. And there, too, postal workers are confronted with sabotage by the trade union associations, which are making the outcome of the industrial action dependent on ever new negotiations and “round table talks” with the postal authority of the far-right government.

Postal workers in the US, Canada and the UK are also facing the same problems. Independent action

committees have already been formed in these countries. They have recently drawn attention to the great danger posed by the complete privatisation and dismantling of postal services. A Canadian postal worker and initiator of an action committee wrote a letter directly to postal workers in Germany:

We postal workers deliver mail, parcels and admail every single day, and we postal workers are discovering our social power. If we break from the nationalism and corporatism of the unions, we have a real opportunity to organize with other sections of workers and lead an international working class revolt against capitalist exploitation and war, and spearhead the fight for better jobs and living conditions in Canada, United States, Mexico, Germany and beyond.

The *World Socialist Web Site* and the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party) propose to form committees in all DHL hubs, sorting centres, bases and post offices, independent of the union bureaucrats, to build a broad movement against war and social austerity. The maxim must be: Lives before profits!



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